

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Friday, September 11, 2009

Washakie County Death Linked to West Nile Virus

A Washakie County man has died as a result of West Nile virus, according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

The adult male had been hospitalized with West Nile neuroinvasive disease and died this week. Seven cases of West Nile virus have been reported to the Wyoming Department of Health this year. Of these, two have been from Platte County, and one each from Campbell, Converse, Fremont, Goshen and Washakie counties.

Most people infected with WNV never develop symptoms. Among those who become ill, symptoms include fever, headache, body aches, skin rash and swollen lymph nodes. A very small percentage of infected persons develop West Nile neuroinvasive disease (i.e. meningitis or encephalitis) with symptoms such as severe headache, fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions and paralysis.

“Wyoming residents need to recognize that West Nile infection can, at times, become a very serious health threat,” said Dr. Tracy Murphy, state epidemiologist with the Wyoming Department of Health. “Everyone should do what they can to protect themselves and others from mosquito bites.”

Mosquitoes spread West Nile virus after they feed on infected birds and then bite people, other birds and animals.

In Wyoming last year there were 10 human West Nile virus cases with no deaths reported. There were 185 human cases with 2 deaths in 2007; 65 human cases with 2 deaths in 2006; 12 human cases with 2 deaths in 2005; 10 human cases with no deaths in 2004; 393 human cases with 9 deaths in 2003; and 2 human cases with no deaths in 2002.

More information about West Nile virus and prevention strategies is available online at www.badskeeter.org or by calling 1-877-WYO-BITE.

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